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Introduction

Introduction

The primary goal for Southwest Albuquerque is to become a complete community. At the time of this planning effort, Southwest Albuquerque lacked the basic design and mixture of uses to be complete. The building blocks for community transformation are a convenient transportation network for walking, bicycling, driving and public transportation; a network of community and neighborhood service areas; a recognizable identity based on local natural and man-made elements; and neighborhoods that each include housing for a variety of households, public services, recreational areas, and shopping all conveniently located and designed for walking, bicycling, and vehicle access.

Public and private development in Southwest Albuquerque is built to comply with current City of Albuquerque or Bernalillo County development regulations. However, many development practices that would foster completeness are not required. Many of the regulations applied to Southwest Albuquerque are found in ordinances and development manuals that apply citywide or county-wide as well as in area and sector plans for Southwest Albuquerque. This plan concentrates on solutions that the City of Albuquerque can apply to Southwest Albuquerque only. Suggestions are also made for Bernalillo County to consider and use. Citywide ordinance amendments that would also benefit Southwest Albuquerque will be initiated separately.

The Action Plan reflects observations and suggestions gathered in late 2005 and 2006 from interviews, meetings, design workshops, and focus groups. Participants included residents, business owners, land owners, representatives of agencies, City and County departments, and other individuals interested

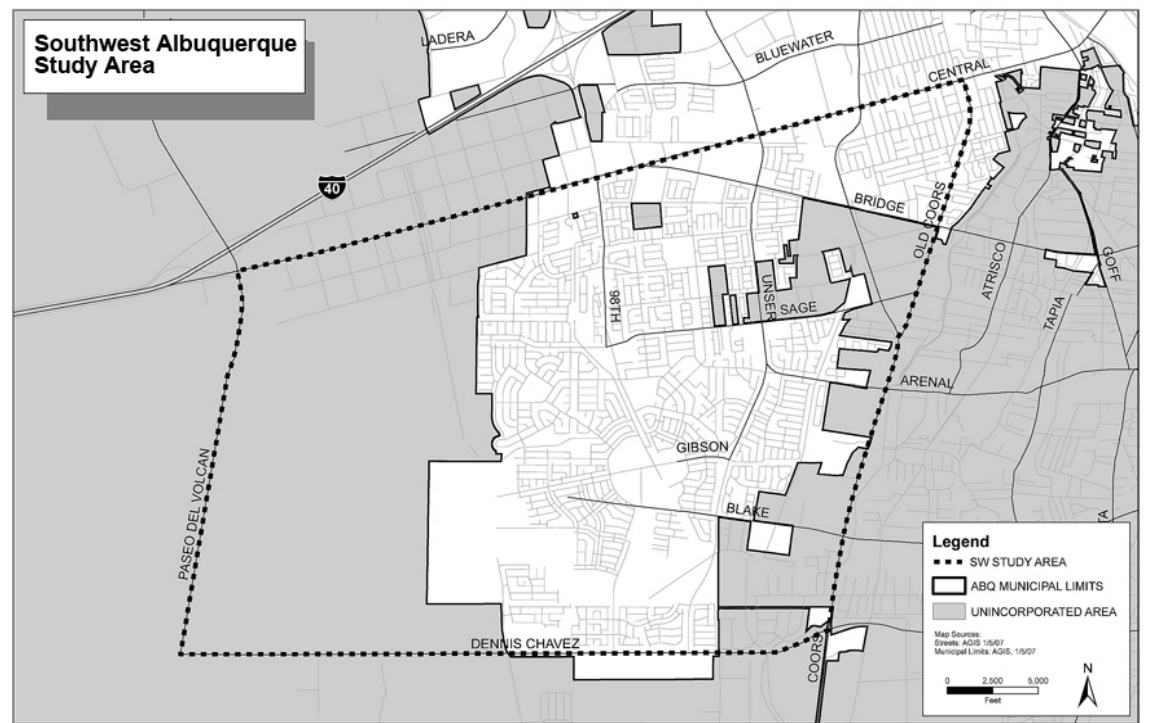
in Southwest Albuquerque. Consultants included Architectural Research Consultants, Inc., Gibbs Planning Group, and Glatting Jackson/Walkable Communities.

Action Plan Contents

The Southwest Albuquerque Strategic Action Plan recommends area plan and sector plan amendments, projects, and programs to help Southwest Albuquerque become a complete community.

The plan is a package of interrelated actions to achieve five interconnected goals:

1. Build complete neighborhoods and a network of activity centers to serve them.
2. Provide convenient public services.
3. Plan and build an interconnected system of public parks, trails and open space.
4. Increase and improve commercial and retail services.
5. Develop a complete multi-modal transportation network.



Current development guidance and regulations for Southwest Albuquerque are found in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, West Side Strategic Plan, Southwest Area Plan, Tower/Unser Sector Development Plan, Rio Bravo Sector Development Plan, West Route 66 Sector Development Plan, Amole Arroyo Corridor Plan, several City ordinances, and the Development Process Manual. The Action Plan includes selective changes only to the West Side Strategic Plan and the three Southwest Albuquerque sector development plans.

Actions for immediate and future implementation: The Action Plan recommends immediate amendments to City plans. The plan also proposes programs and capital projects for implementation over the next 10 to 15 years and zoning actions that could follow adoption of the Action Plan. All actions were chosen for their power to change conditions in Southwest Albuquerque. The whole package is needed to create a complete community.

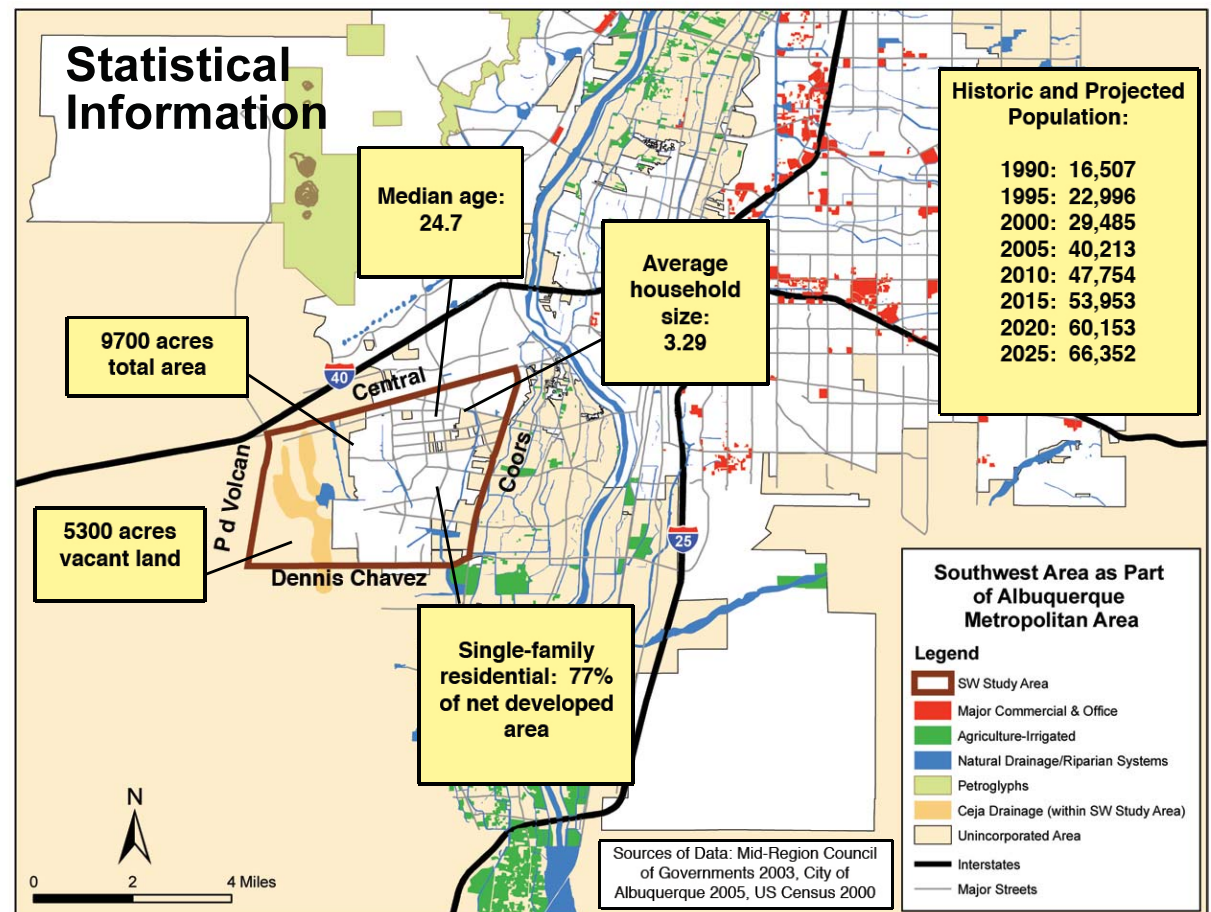
Existing Conditions

In the late 20th century much of the area west of Coors Boulevard was undeveloped grassland. It was used by many South Valley residents as grazing land, a nature preserve, and an outdoor recreation area. The exceptions were the Westgate neighborhood and some development along Central Avenue.

In the first five years of the 21st Century, Southwest Albuquerque was the fastest developing area in Bernalillo County. This portion of the metro area is expected to continue to expand west and south. This continued growth outward will challenge City and County ability to provide public services,

parks, trails, open space, complete neighborhoods, and transportation networks. It also challenges the private sector's ability to build sufficient sites for shopping, services, and jobs.

The eastern portion of Southwest Albuquerque is not far from Downtown and Northwest Albuquerque employment, shopping and entertainment, but the plan area has relatively few destinations of its own. Street, park, trail, and other public infrastructure also lags behind residential development.



From observations gathered about Southwest Albuquerque through community involvement and data collection, the following items appear to be the most critical issues by topic area:

1. Complete communities, neighborhoods and activity centers

- **Neighborhood/Community Components**
 - Most current southwest subdivisions do not have the community buildings, parks, schools, shopping, and jobs to be complete neighborhoods or parts of a complete community.
- **Housing Diversity** - Existing residential zoning districts used in Southwest Albuquerque allow several types of housing, but do not prohibit repeating one type of housing (single-family detached, single-family attached, or multi-family) without interruption throughout a subdivision. Residents like their affordable housing and friendly neighbors, but want a greater diversity of housing price range, building style, unit type, and target markets.
- **Walking to Local Community Services** – Subdivision street patterns and perimeter walls make walking to existing and future community buildings, parks, schools, and shopping difficult or impossible.
- **Sustainability** – Several Southwest Albuquerque starter homes have low or no down payments and large mortgages, creating the potential for high rates of default and foreclosure.

2. Public facilities

- **It is time to catch up.** - Rapid residential subdivision development has outpaced the provision of public facilities (libraries, community centers, schools), and public services (police, fire).



From the top: 1) The view of Southwest Albuquerque and the rest of the city from the Ceja; 2) a development pattern that lacks variation in housing styles, sizes, and types; 3) a long wall creating dead space along a Southwest Albuquerque street.



3. Public parks, trails and Major Public Open Space

- **The number of existing easily accessible public parks, trails and Major Public Open Space areas is insufficient** for the current and anticipated population.
- **Phenomenal views** and proximity to wildlife are valued by residents and should be preserved.

4. Shopping, services, and employment

- **Housing development has outpaced commercial development.**
- **A lack of area employment** forces residents to travel to jobs in other areas of the city, contributing to road congestion and long travel times.

5. Complete transportation network

- **The street network is deficient and streets are congested**, especially at peak times. More connecting streets need to be planned and built. Existing streets need to be completed. Traffic control devices are needed at street intersections. Better street design is needed for safe driving, bicycling, and walking.
- **Public transportation service is insufficient** to serve the area.
- **Walking and Bicycling** - To better serve residents who want to walk and bicycle, the form of recent development must be changed. Walking is hampered by long walls that create dead space along streets, extremely wide streets that are difficult to cross, roll (estate) curbs that encourage parking on the sidewalk, and walking routes that are long and circuitous.

6. Regional and General Issues

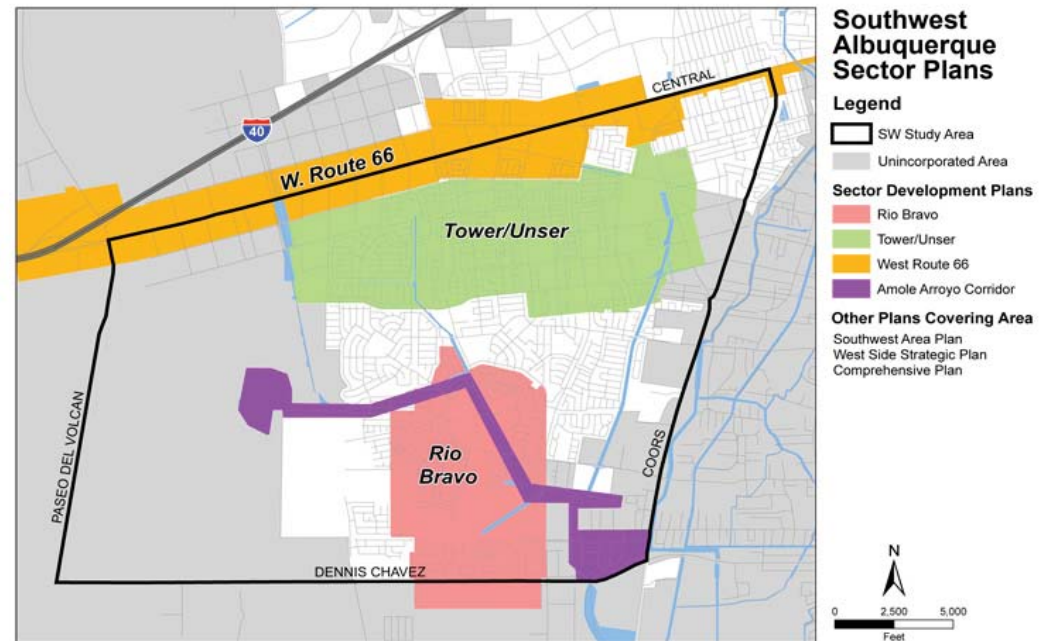
- Southwest Albuquerque residents no longer want to feel like “the stepchildren of the city.” It is important that they obtain a fair share of resources and an ongoing say in City decisions concerning their area.
- South Valley residents want to ensure that the South Valley is protected from the effects of topographical and drainage changes from development west of Coors Boulevard.
- Continued development to the west and south needs to be managed to prevent additional strain on limited resources.

Factors Shaping Existing Development

Many factors shape development in Southwest Albuquerque: adopted City plans, ordinances, and regulations; natural landforms; drainage facilities; and market forces.

Planning Documents

The following plans guide development in Southwest Albuquerque. All lower-ranked plans must comply with policies in higher-ranked plans. Proposed modifications to some of these plans are included in this Action Plan.



- **The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan** provides the broadest geographical and policy framework for the City and County. This “Rank 1” plan was adopted in 1988 and has since been amended multiple times.
- **The West Side Strategic Plan**, adopted by the City of Albuquerque in 1997 and the County in 1999, is a “Rank 2” plan with policies affecting the entire West Side, from the Bernalillo/Sandoval county line on the north to the Atrisco Land Grant line on the south. It was last amended in 2005.
- **The Southwest Area Plan**, amended and adopted by Bernalillo County and the Extraterritorial Land Use Authority as a “Rank 2” plan in 2001, covers the South Valley and unincorporated areas of Southwest Albuquerque. While both the West Side Strategic Plan and the Southwest Area Plan address issues in the entire plan area, their authority is limited; the West Side Strategic Plan has authority only over property within the City limits, and the Southwest Area Plan has authority only over unincorporated lands.
- **Three City sector development plans** (“Rank 3”) guide development in portions of Southwest Albuquerque with planning policies, guidelines and zoning, including use requirements and design standards.
 - **Route 66 Sector Development Plan**, adopted by the City of Albuquerque (1988)
 - **Tower/Unser Sector Development Plan**, adopted by the City of Albuquerque (1989), amended (1997)
 - **Rio Bravo Sector Development Plan**, adopted by the City of Albuquerque, original (1983) and Amendment #1 (1999)
- **The Amole Arroyo Corridor Plan**, a “Rank 3” plan, was adopted by the City and County in 1991.

Agencies

The **Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority** (AMAFCA) major drainage channels crisscross Southwest Albuquerque, affecting its form.

Albuquerque Public Schools has six schools in the area and is planning three new schools, two elementary and one high school.

The **Mid-Region Council of Governments** coordinates with the City, County and other local governments to develop the 20-year Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a six-year program for funding metro area transportation projects consistent with the MTP.

Ordinances and Other Regulatory Documents

Two articles of the City of Albuquerque Code of Ordinances, the **City of Albuquerque Comprehensive Zoning Code** and **Subdivision Ordinance**, regulate development within Albuquerque municipal boundaries. The Zoning Code regulates use, density, and design of each lot, while the Subdivision Ordinance regulates subdivision layout, drainage, and street connectivity.

The **Development Process Manual** provides development design standards. Bernalillo County has its own regulations for development, and in 2006/07 was crafting Master Plan Criteria.

Geography/Topography/Soils/Drainage

Southwest Albuquerque natural landforms are assets recognized by the community. The Ceja or “eyebrow,” is a sandy escarpment that slopes eastward from just east of Paseo del Volcan to just west of 118th Street. From the Ceja, the land continues to slope gently to Coors Boulevard SW, the dividing line between Southwest Albuquerque and the steeper slope into the South Valley.

Soils are generally sandy and alluvial, poorly suited for growing vegetation, highly erodible from wind, water and foot traffic and very poor for holding water. (Southwest Area Plan, p. 15-17)

Development Trends, Land Jurisdiction and Ownership

Southwest Albuquerque development since 2000 has produced a patchwork of walled-in subdivisions, incomplete streets that are overloaded at commuting times, and limited parks, trails, public buildings, and shopping areas. This newer development is quite different in form than the older Alamosa and Westgate subdivisions and commercial and residential development along Central Avenue and Old Coors Boulevard.

Southwest Albuquerque is only partially within City limits. Most of Southwest Albuquerque west of 118th Street and east of the Amole del Norte Diversion Channel is outside City boundaries and is governed by and receives services from Bernalillo County. Other portions of Southwest Albuquerque within the Tower/Unser area are a mixture of incorporated and unincorporated land. This patchwork has resulted in inconsistent public service delivery and street development and maintenance. Historically, the Atrisco Land Grant and its representative, Westland Development Corporation held much of the area west of Coors Boulevard. Various parcels were sold over time. Much of the land east of 118th

Street has been built out. Most of the land west of 118th Street was part of a late 2006 sale to a development company, SunCal.

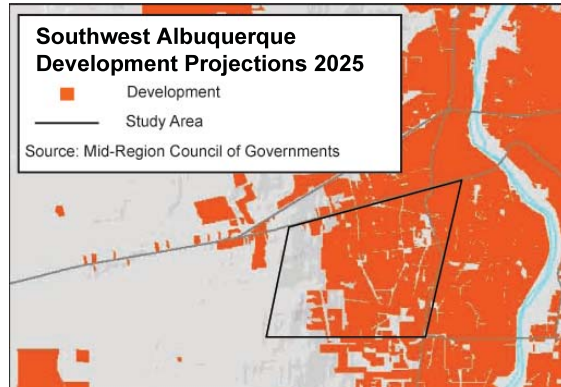
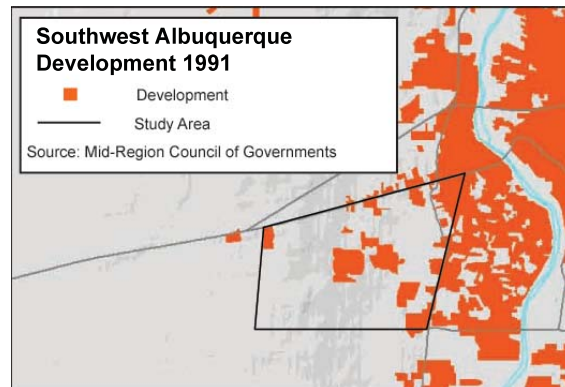
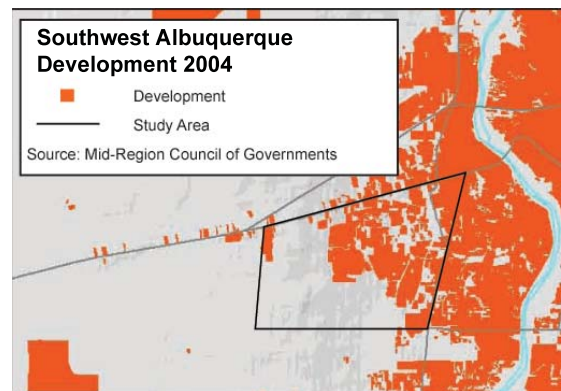
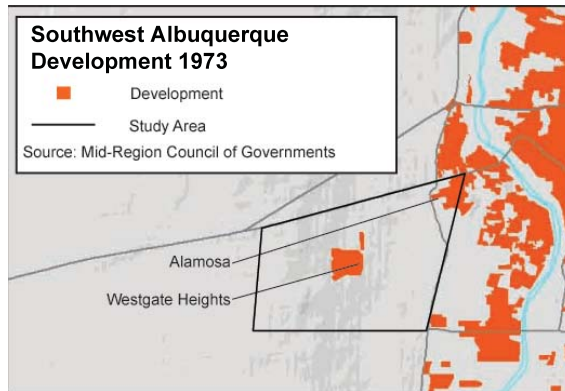
Another major landowner is Curb, Inc. Their holdings lie within the boundaries of the Rio Bravo Sector Development Plan and have been subdivided and continue to be sold for housing development and more recently, commercial and school development.

Future Development

Southwest Albuquerque population is expected to continue to grow over the next few decades. The area might house approximately 66,000 residents by 2025 and 100,000 when fully built out.

A Bright Future

Meetings, workshops, interviews, and focus groups were used to bring community members into the planning process to convey their issues, concerns, hopes, and dreams for the future of their community. (See appendices B, C, and G for information about public participation.)



Planning participants envision a future Southwest Albuquerque that is an inclusive community integrated into the rest of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County, but with its own special identity. With the implementation of this Action Plan, Southwest Albuquerque could start to become a more attractive, vibrant, inclusive, convenient, comfortable, safe, and friendly community. It would welcome, engage and nurture residents, employees, and visitors of all incomes, ages, and abilities. It would have beautiful interconnected neighborhoods that promote community interaction through convenient, pleasant and safe walking and bicycling destinations. Neighborhoods would become integral parts of a complete community that provides all elements necessary for quality daily living.

The future Southwest Albuquerque community should contain the following elements to make it complete:



One possible arterial configuration, with frontage streets next to thoroughfares



An example of a subdivision with good sidewalk design



A Community Activity Center concept: courtesy of 4th Street and Montañó Boulevard Coalition Visioning

Complete Neighborhoods

- In each neighborhood - A variety of New Mexico style quality-built housing types (single-family detached, single-family attached, and multi-family) in a variety of price ranges
- Libraries and multigenerational centers to serve seniors, other adults, and children
- Schools that serve as community centers in the evenings, weekends, and summers
- Public art
- Parks and other recreation facilities for families, group activities and sports
- Concentrations of shops that meet local needs
- Streets and the properties adjacent to them designed first for pedestrian safety, efficiency, comfort, and interest

Community Networks and Destinations

- Public open space and wildlife preserves
- A network of safe, efficient, attractive trails and wildlife corridors
- Concentrations of shops that meet needs of the community
- A variety of religious institutions
- Medical services and public services
- Convenient, reliable mass transit service that effectively connects Southwest Albuquerque with the rest of the City
- Redesigned streets that are now walled and tunnel-like
- No new wall-lined streets
- Regional attractions and tourist-quality destinations
- Quality jobs

The following images illustrate some of the key elements needed to create a complete community.

Physical Elements of the Vision

